

The CATCH

Harvest



Ink Illustration // By Cora Kocan // Age 6

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Friends & Neighbors,

Welcome back to *The Catch*, Cordova's literary & arts quarterly. In this Fall collection you will find creative writing, photography, and an assortment of arts. Each publication announces the next quarter's theme and extends an invitation for submissions. All ages and all mediums are accepted for review.

To our contributing artists & writers: *THANK YOU* for sharing a bit of your inner selves, and the beauty of your crafts. To parents, teachers, & mentors: *THANK YOU* for fostering creative expression and collaboration.

To a community that supports the arts: *THANK YOU* for the opportunity to tend this emerging publication. Let's grow together as artists and humans.

Jillian Gold
Editor



The theme for our Winter quarterly is

tracks

Submissions are due by December 15th

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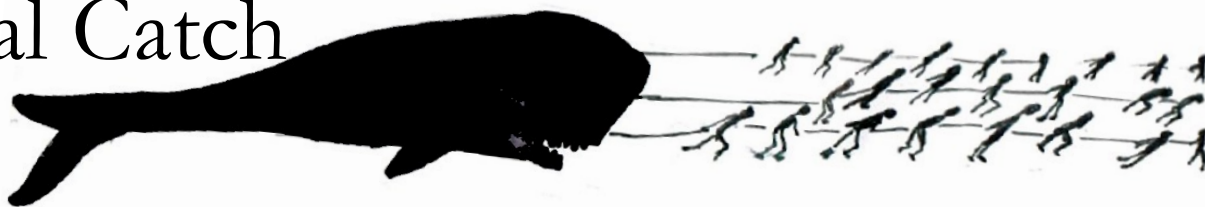
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DISCLAIMER

The submissions in this publication exclusively reflect the views and opinions of the participating artists and do not, in any way, represent the views or opinions of the city or its members.

While some profanities have been edited (with writer permissions), there is occasional use of forceful language in this publication. Please exercise reader discretion.

Seasonal Catch



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Sonnet for the Season
Harvest Moon's Reign

By Rebecca Jean Martin

Inspired by an Alaskan Native legend accounting salmon's origin

Circle around the fire to celebrate
 Chinook, Sockeye, Coho, Pink, Dog Salmon!
 As groaning nets burst, full decks generate
 assurance against otherwise famine.
 Immortal beings emerged from below
 deep ocean currents, swimming from village
 toward sunlight...arching silver golden glow
 spirits destined to leap beyond pillage.
 How they nourish, embrace us with wholeness.
 Juicy, succulent, sweet – so wild we dance,
 drink wine, sing song, make love, create closeness,
 release their skeleton remains – to chance?
 While winter's winds sweep us within again
 to dream the gift of Time: harvest moon's reign.



Tiedeman Slough Sunset // Photo by Arlene Rosenkrans



Copper River Legacy

By Cody Shaw

I unearthed from the stream's gravel shelter
 Flowed down the river's mighty current
 To the Ocean's boundless abyss
 This is my beginning

In from the Void
 Against the mighty tide
 I lay in the gravel to shelter my young
 In the stream I was born in
 Only then have I fulfilled the cycle
 The cycle is my legacy



Autumn Days

By Sean Ybanez

Leaves are turning red
 All the bears are getting fed
 Autumn is now here

Harvest of Grins

By Gerald *Pieface* Masolini

I'm 75 years old now and my mind is full of memories. I find that a bunch of them are among my very best possessions. Some of them make me grin, but time is slowly fading them away. I'd like to try to harvest a few to pass on to you, hoping they'll make you grin too. I'll title and number each memory to help both of us stay on track.

1. *The Day the Dog Tore My Ear Off*

My mom and dad raised sheep for a living along California's Mendocino coast. Imagine, being a kid, herding sheep on those beautiful hills looking over the ocean...they were not brushy then as they are now; they all looked mowed from being grazed by sheep and cattle.

One day my dad put me and the family sheep dog, Shep, in charge of holding about 40 lambs while he opened some gates. That dog was all business, sitting down and staring at those nervous lambs, not allowing them to go anywhere, doing as he was told.

Sitting still when you are a seven year old kid is a big order. I sat close to Shep and began doing my best snarl/growl imitation real close his ear, just to pass the time and see what he would do. He sat like a statue and tolerated my foolishness for about a half hour. Suddenly he whirled and tore off my ear. At least that's what I thought. I reached up to feel what was left and my hand came back covered with blood and the damage really hurt. I thought I was killed. All I could think of was to run home, crying. I knew my mom would feel sorry me, hugging me and saying, "Oh my poor boy!" Instead, there was no poor boy treatment at all; she stood there sternly looking at me and asked, "Why did he bite you?" I told her what I'd done and she looked me in the eye and said, "The dog was right." I couldn't believe what my one ear that remained heard.

I can't remember if mom or I cleaned up the blood drops all over her just-mopped floor or who taped up my ear. I could see then that my ear was still attached to my head and that I'd probably live.



Dippin' for Kings // Photo by Teal Barmore

It took me quite a spell of growing up to realize that mom had made a very wise judgement. Many times over the years, the memory of that day has put a grin on my face while I think what a smart lady mom was.

Are you grinning yet? Try this next little poem.

2. *Italian Fisherman's Poem*

This is only a little poem; maybe good for just a little grin. I suspect that Italian immigrants brought it from the old country in the late 1800s...it sounds like they were not so good at speaking English yet. Remember, nets were pulled by hand back then. Here we go...don't just sit there with your teeth in your mouth, start pulling.

*We pulla da net
To catcha da fish
To make da mon
To buya da bread
To getta da strength
To pulla da net*

(continues on next page)

3. Notice how that Italian poems, words just flow along...the same holds true for an Italian boat I once bought...built in the Sausalito Boatyard by Frank Pasquinnucci for Nunzio and Dominic Fusciano. Pronouncing those names just makes me grin...or even smile. What do you think, Pasquinnucci? Is the harvest having a happy looking effect on your facial muscles?

4. *The Day Makarka Outwitted Me Again*

I met Cordova's Stan Makarka in the spring of 1965. We worked together at Jim Poor's cannery, Point Chehalis Packers, mostly freezing halibut and ourselves. Stan was one of the wittiest people I've ever met and if Hollywood could see the faces he could make, they would have hired him in a minute. I'm proud to say he was an old friend of mine.

One busy day at the grocery store, I spotted Stan amongst the shoppers and it occurred to me to mess with him a bit. I slipped up to him, put on my best Italian bad guy face and quietly delivered this news to him: "Hey Makarka. We Italians, me and Casciano and Bocci are going to take this place away from you Aleuts." He looked at me like I was hopeless and without hesitation snarled, "It's about time." He did it so quickly and well that all I could do was quietly stumble away.

It's the fifth of September, 2021 today and I just learned that we lost Stan. There's going to be a huge gap in our community.....just seeing him smile and wave was like a touch of sunshine. *Thank you Stan.*

****Editor's note:** There has been some contention over the accuracy of the "Sylvester" memory. Please direct your concerns to Gerald. He looks forward to it.

5. *"But I can't say Sylvester"*

Here's a little bitty grin maker. I don't want to leave it out because I admire its cleverness.

Remember Sylvester the cat? I think he first appeared in the earliest (and best) Disney cartoons. There was a little cat that followed Sylvester around. This little guy had an irritating habit of mispronouncing Sylvester's name. This frustrated Sylvester to a point where he would tell that kitty cat to get it right. And the kitty would reply, saying, "But I can't say Sylvester, Sylvester."

******(please see editor's note at bottom)

6. *Luciano Pavarotti, the Best of Today's Harvest*

Ok. Go to Youtube and watch Pavarotti and Brian Adams sing "O Sole Mio"...it only takes two minutes. Watch closely so you can see how much fun these two are having (take a look at Brian's shirt; it looks like he might have borrowed it from Luciano).

If all the joy and happiness that radiates from these two doesn't make you feel good, check to see if your ticker is still working.

'Til we meet again, remember the words of the great singer/songwriter John Prine...if you see some sad, lonesome eyes, say, "*Hello in there, bello*" (Prine 1971),

... and the world will be better.

Prine, J, 1971, *Hello In There*, CD, Atlantic Records.



Photo by David Saiget



Prince William Sound // Photo by Arlene Rosenkrans

Actually Needed

By Steve Schoonmaker—*F/V Saulteur*

On one small boat . . . Just me
Pushing myself to get to a need
Whatever it is, perceived or believed

What's the use of a gillnetter, if it can't catch some fish
What's the use of my muse, if not following a wish
Yea, majestic and vulnerable
From my singular view, to do what I must
To do what I do
Yea, nipping and tucking, pulling both ends
Making ends meet, not to bust, so you bend
Whatever it is you extend or pretend

Whatever it is, perceived or believed
On September's North Pacific trying to get to a need
Some assurance of catching a wild salmon breed
Blue the elusive on the wide-open breeze
Out to see, on one small boat . . . Just me

Out from the sureness of safety,
 or the numb of the norm
Out from the logic of reason,
 so far removed from a storm

Way out in this visceral something
That's meant for the lives of the born
That's meant for this eternal something
Like islands continually worn
Without duality

Yea, mortality
Like worn pillared rocks, exposed to the Sea
Like whaleback grass islands and storm-seasoned trees
Like black cracked rock growing grass seed
Shouldered in boulders storm washed by the Seas
Like tidelines clinging popweed
Without duality

Under wind-lifted eagles, in the lee of concealed
With the flopping of puffins, by the dive of the seal
In the moods of the water, the storms will reveal
With the moods of the hurt, and moods of the heal
With the moods of the hungry, and moods of the meal

Majestic and vulnerable, from a singular view
Without duality,
To do what I must, to do what I do
Trying to get to a need, perceived or believed
On one small boat . . . Just me

(continues on next page)

Anchored at the Martin Islands,
 ominous weather in sight
 And the VHF radio says, storm warning tonight
 By the rocks of Fox Island, anchored in tight
 As the bruise-purple skies confirm it for me
 With East wind forty-five, gusts to sixty
 With most of my line payed out in a scope
 Stretched like guitar string, straight out the boat
 Anchored in Sea clay, with eighty feet of chain
 Gusts shudder the cabin, heavy with rain

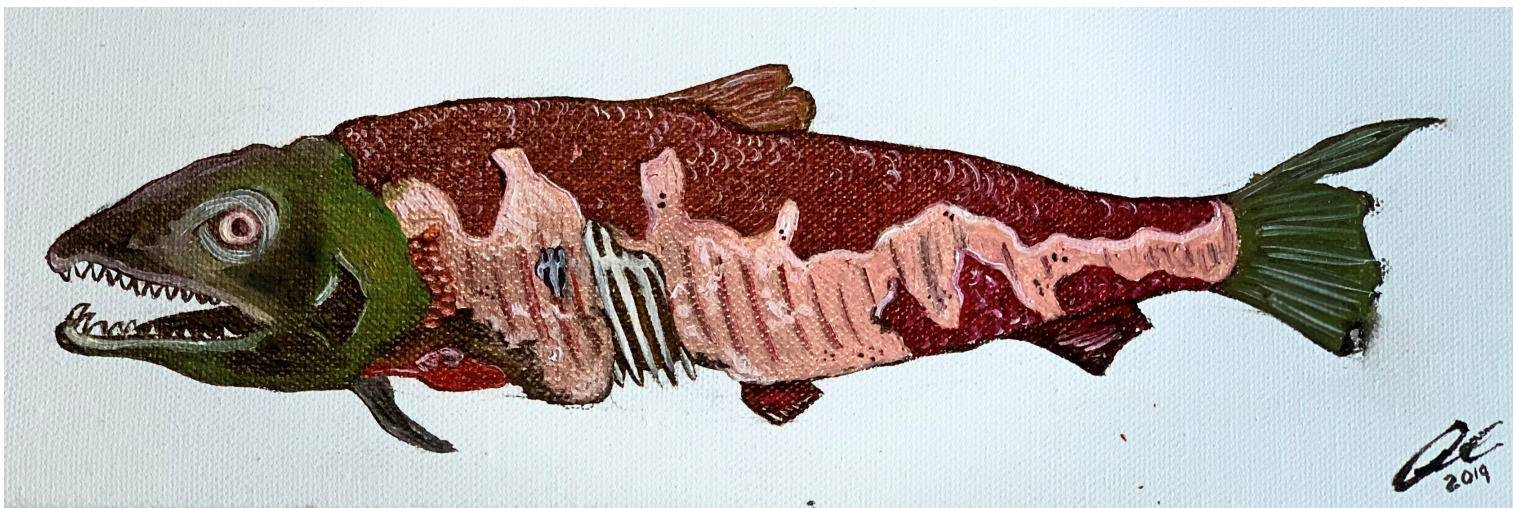
In the howl of the dark, without duality
 Luminescent the waves, as day leaves the scene
 Over the roller, and tied to the cleat
 Listening for the sound of an anchor alarm beep
 On September's North Pacific, a night without sleep
 Trying to get to a need, perceived or believed
 On one small boat . . . Just me

Yea, I know why I'm out here
 Yea, I trust in my gear
 But my instincts are land-based, I'm managing fear
 Feeling so small by the force of the Sea
 The instinctual callings of mortality
 Is it confidence, or foolishness, or some kind of drive
 Or some compulsion of instinct
 Out here risking alive, perceived or believed
 Without duality

Well, it's real hard to see
 Through the dark and the rain
 And the antenna screams, as my imagining mind's
 Slow shrinking me, swinging from a half inch,
 Three strand line
 Grabbing the floor of the Sea
 Without duality
 On one small boat . . . Just me

With a sigh of relief, froze a moment in time
 My awakened mortality, when it finally got light
 The odds giving favor, and the anchor held tight
 Majestic and vulnerable, perceived or believed
 With mortal fragility, by the force of the Sea
 Kind, fierce, and unforgiving
 Without duality

With copious amounts of adrenaline in me
 In the lee of concealed, fully heeded
 In the storms of the fall, unimpeded
 Lies the gist of it all, in the calm feeling small
 Trying to get what I actually needed
 Without duality . . . perceived or believed
 On one small boat . . . Just me



Oop, Another Zombie // oil on canvas by Alysha Cypher

Plum Lucky

By Moe Bowstern



I put up a gallon of plum sauce yesterday, added it to the gallon waiting in the fridge for me to buy rings, lids, and jars, seal the spicy sweetness into amounts appropriate for small households. Dehydrators hum in the basement. Hops and fennel dry in the bedroom, and bring a lovely scent to our sleep; the fuzzy mullein leaves among them wait to treat respiratory woes of the coming season's change and—of course—the viral plague that walks the land.

I've been home a few weeks after a long Alaskan wander, from Naknek up the Kvichak along the ancient portage now undertaken by Bristol Bay drifters homebound north for Homer or south to Kodiak—my own destination. I hitched a ride with an old friend—she's in her 20s, but I've known her from babyhood, an old friendship with a young woman.

As I've aged, intangibles become my richest crop, sustaining me along lines of connection that stretch back 35 years to my first visit to Alaska when I arrived to fill the boots of my formidable older sister aboard a salmon tender. I was a miserable greenhorn on a boat of greenhorns; picking up from set netters in Uganik Bay, I first crossed paths with three people I visited this summer, all of whom went on to give me jobs as a deckhand or a poet—in the

90s, the aughts, earlier this year. This was my first visit to Alaska concerned solely with abstract harvest. Of all the seeds I planted over the last three decades, many have sprouted into lively vines of vibrant kinship.

My stop at the remote abandoned cannery-turned-squatter fishing village of Graveyard Point grounded me into friendships I had rooted over the years in Astoria, Oregon at the annual Fisher Poets Gathering; finally I witnessed riparian currents that rumble beneath stories of comrades who fish the Kvichak, Ugashik, Egegik, Nushagak, Naknek and other rivers of the northern tundra.

On the journey from Pile Bay I regaled striving young female skippers with tales of Bristol Bay highliners who were once my teenage herring crewmates, and cut legendary elders down to human scale with humor and humility. In Kodiak I visited west side fish camps I wasn't sure I'd see again. We lifted a glass for an old deckhand mentor of mine who left behind a million stories and a community stunned by a meteoric illness that winked out her light just as we grasped her diagnosis. I played with her grandsons, sang to her daughters and marveled at the gift her life had been.

(continues on next page)

My loving man traveled with me, a painter of paintings; in his sketchbook he pinned down the glory of August in Alaska. The power and scale of the Copper River delta enchanted him; a man of few words, he lost them all the day my sister drove us out to the Million Dollar Bridge to watch the silt scour the pilings. He is at his studio now, processing sketches into paintings, much like plums become sauce, with no doubt similarly delicious outcome.

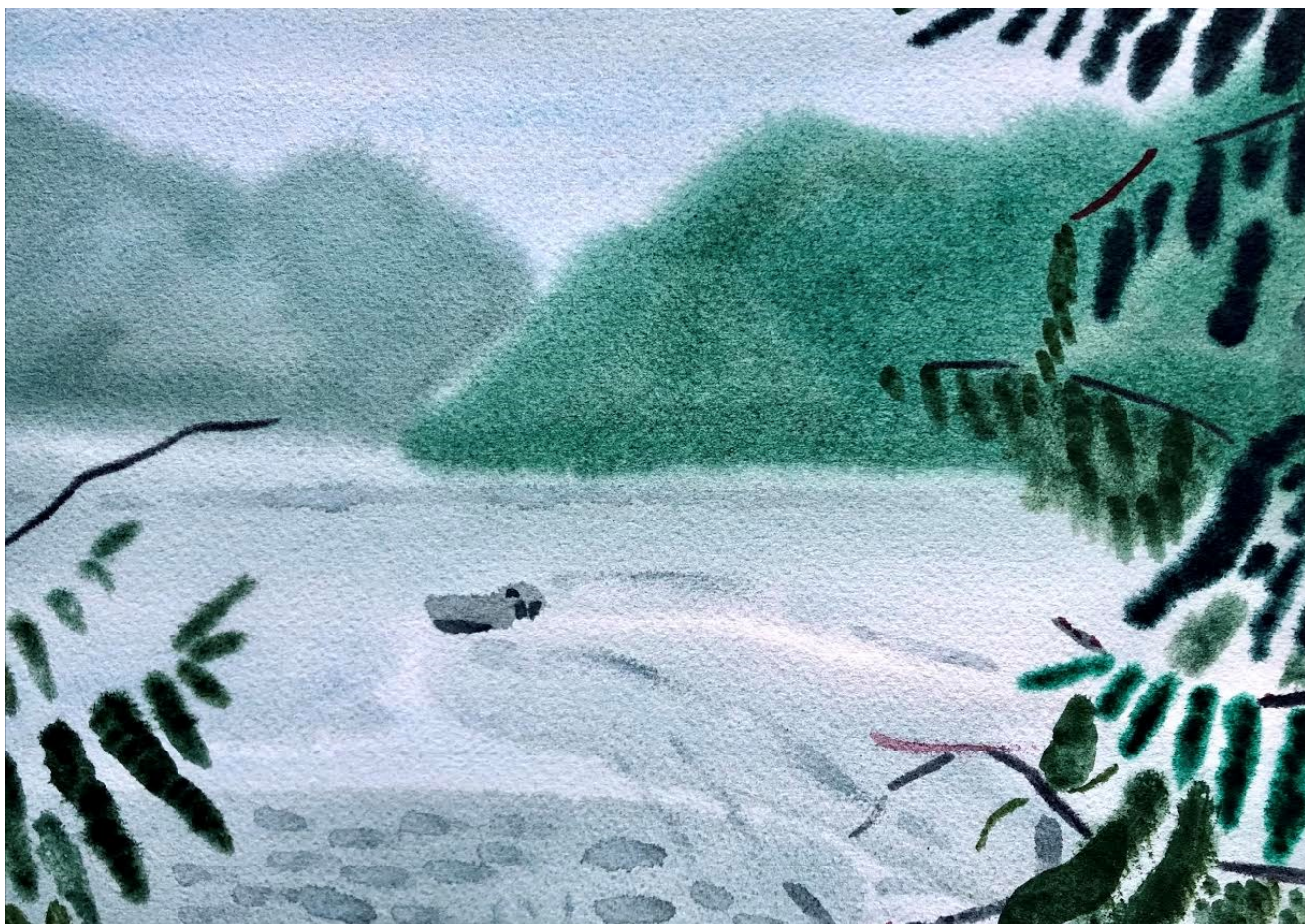
I hiked worn paths in Kodiak with friends of a quarter century, strengthening old webs with new weavings informed by my own aging, illnesses, survival. We mended wounds, left others for another time and laughed at what we could not control. Everywhere, dogs capered; everywhere, I passed old versions of myself—careless, heedless, but physically so capable. Loss and death yield rich wisdom, when we can keep our hearts open to learn it; I treasure any grace granted to me that leads to this wealth. I don't mind walking slow, as long as I can still walk.

My travels ended here in this community at Eyak's foot, within the circle of blood family (and finally, a cat!) who effortlessly knitted me into the hum of their lives so I too could be sustained within the living buzz of community, despite my visitor status.

Back home in a major city in the Lower 48, a surveillance drone circles our neighborhood, running patterns night after night—collecting cellphone data, we surmise, a dark gleaning of unknown consequence. Across the planet, we are invited to remember how we reap what we sow. May we sow with a wisdom aimed at connection and support.

For 5 weeks I traveled the golden roads of chosen and born family. The harvest has been bountiful; my heart and soul are full. Thank you to my hosts and to the land for receiving me.

Tomorrow, we pick the tomatoes.



Heading Out // Watercolor by George Wilson

She Stirs

By Greg Mans

She stirs
 With strong arms and back,
 A ladle long and thick.
Her eyes sparkle.
 A tear drips slow down her cheek,
 She catches it,
 And puts it in the pot
Her eyes sparkle.

The moon lights the yard through leafless trees.
 A fire burns bright.
 She is smiling.
 She hums to herself a song sung through the ages,
 While cats rub their bodies against her legs, purring.

The smell of garlic, onion and ginger come off the pot.
 She adds turnips, carrot, mushrooms, potato and leek,
 Then leaves of kale.

She steps from the pot,
 Dancing with an unseen partner;
 Sweeping across the yard.

The moon at three quarter,
 The wind blows light
 And leaves stir.

She laughs out loud.
 Then a deep breath,
 Bravely preparing for the night ahead.

Harvest Near Again

By Jacob Ranney

Harvest near again
 Crops begin to bear their gifts
 Plentiful and sweet

Love and Warmth :)

By Chelsea Mapili

Wagons filled with crops
 Stunning colors paint the trees
 Filled with love and warmth

Autumn Hunting

By Trent Dundas

Crunchy leaves bang bang
 A down deer and falling birds
 Success in the air

Discarded Bounty: Fruits & Veggies // Photo by Teal Barmore





Moose Pot Roast

By Leo Craig

Cut & Carry - Moose Quartering // Photo by Teal Barmore

Ingredients

2 Tbsp olive Oil
 3 lb moose roast
 1 onion
 4 cloves of garlic, sliced
 Salt and pepper
 1 Tbsp oregano
 1 ½ cup of beef broth
 4 potatoes
 4 carrots
 Optional (any additional vegetables, cabbage, parsnips, etc.)

Instructions

- Preheat your oven to 325 F
- Put your oil in your dutch oven
- Rub and season roast with salt, pepper and oregano, then sear your roast on all sides in the dutch oven
- Slice up onions and put them in the bottom of your dutch oven underneath your roast, next add your sliced garlic cloves on top, then add the beef broth and cover the dutch oven and bake for 1 hour
- Then add your cut up vegetables (potatoes, carrots), cover your dutch oven and cook for another hour or so, until done to your liking
- After baking, let the pot roast rest for 15 minutes before serving

Total Cook Time 2-2 ½

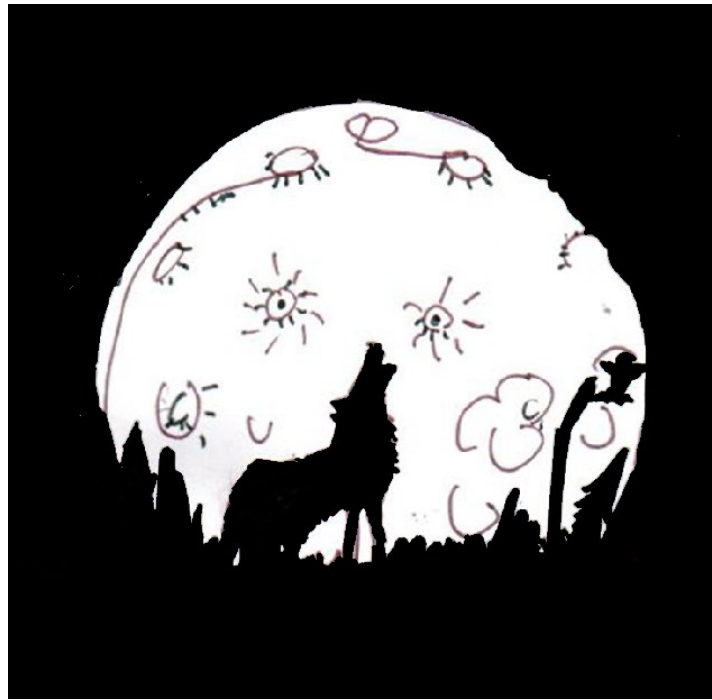
Kong

By Steve Schoonmaker—*F/V Saulteur*

Kong . . . King Kong
 Was pure, man . . . Nature clean
 Like jungle's mist
 They did it to him . . . what does
 That say to the jungles . . . that allow
 Our lungs to function
 A society *un* moved, cinema and audiences
 Missing Kong's symbolism
 It has been said that Beauty
 Killed the Beast . . . Beast . . . Beast
 That's what they called Kong

Kong was beautiful
 So they took him . . . and the pretty girl
 Was so beautiful . . . so Kong took her
 Seizing beauty . . . oh reeking
 Of possession . . . and mind-altering loss
 What does that say to the jungles . . . that
 Allow our lungs to function

Kong has known this . . . the equations of man
 Had not yet polluted him, from the pure . . .
 And the conscious flow, of natural pre man
 Clean . . . with jungle's mist on his back
 Unmoved by society



Kong knew more . . . more
 Than solved by violence
 Kong knew Beauty. Kong knew Beauty
 Which is still speaking
 Kong is Beauty still speaking
 Seized by violence and possession
 Seized unconscious
 Man putting Nature . . . putting Kong
 In his place . . . empowered man

Kong still speaks over Man's
 Childish insecurities
 Kong's great symbolism
 Still speaks
 Over buildings and streets
 Over suburbs asleep
 Still . . . not listening

In the flashing glow of their screens.

Eno[ugh]

By Allegory S.

Enough

haha
what that
for me

Will there ever be - ? Or
What do we do, knowing we are - ? Always

As in
my mind and body and spirit, our friends and neighbors, my work, our ways of living and loving
shared relationships; needs, pains, joys
are enough

Also like
I'm without water or food or shelter, our lands are poisoned, I'm sick, our love is fraught
systemic disruption of relationships; the power of fearful people; the fear of powerful people
are not enough

Not enough to make unrecognizable
the child in others
who doesn't know what enough is
and is angry and afraid

I've been there
I share my empathy
because

I have enough

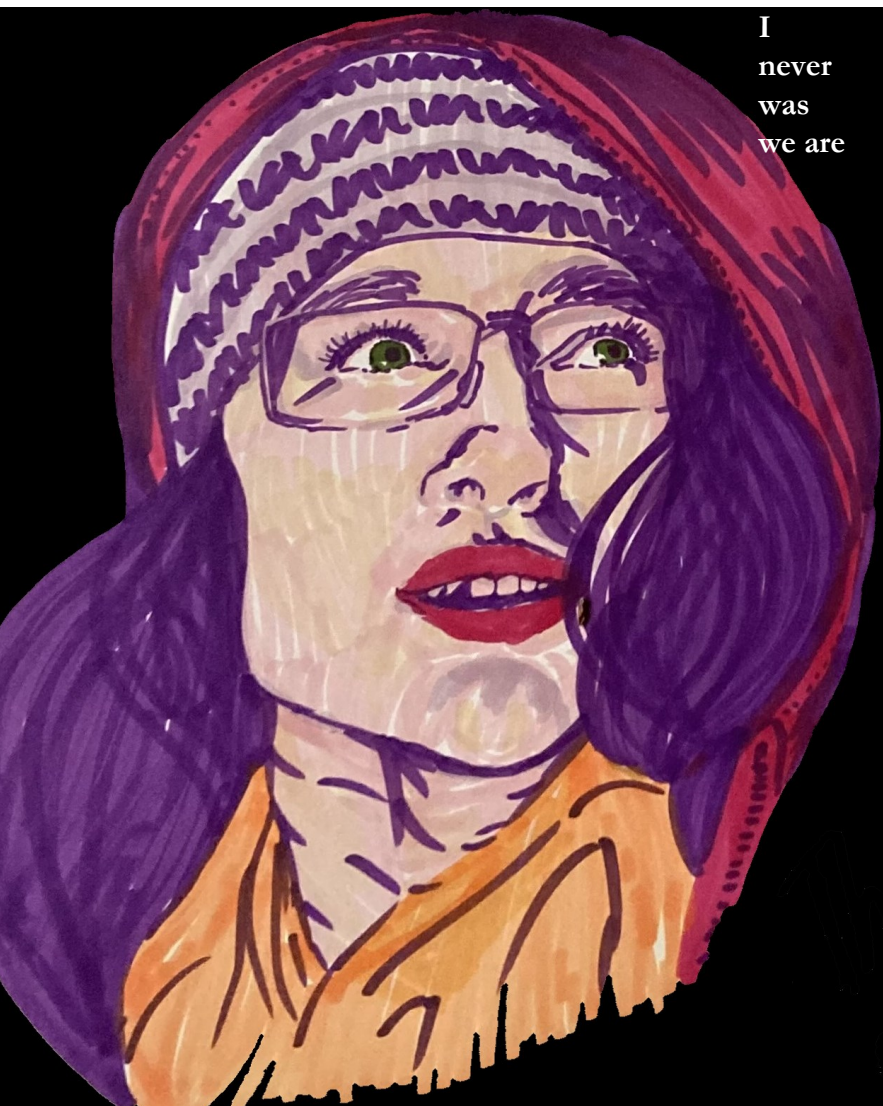


Digital Illustration by Sam Bair

Divine Disappointment

By Samantha Feemster

My		
disappointment	play	We
is	my	love
divine	way	laugh
	to	dance
useful	Presence	and
and		play
needed		
to	Everything	sing
build	I	my
a	touch	way
Better	my	to
World	Goddess	health
	Touches	
There is		dance
another Way	Everything	my
	I	way
	See	to
	She	wholeness
	Sees	



If Line, Then Wave

By Jillian Gold

The circle we've drawn since our birth
A designation fruit-to-seed
Both cruel and kind dictates our worth

Though consciousness ought to be freed
From tracing over lines marked black
There lies within persistent need

To ensure we are not for lack
Of satisfaction to our roles
Though converse notes might upward stack

Like weeds along the firm fence poles
Backyard a chorus overgrown
Sings serpentine through chain-link holes

With roots that ride the undertone
And point counter to norms we've sown

In Russian, chanterelle mushrooms are called *Lesitchki*, which translates to *little foxes*. They are named for their coloration and sneaky tendencies.



Photo by Elena Golyeva

Now Here to Go

By C.V.

"The road is long and weary", so it is said
Painful to walk, treacherously tread
It seems to survive is all one can do
Clutching and grabbing and muddling through
Tinted and tainted by melancholy hue

But are there not points all along the way
The road not taken, the path of today?
Now, in this moment is the choice to see,
Nothing is set in stone, nor need ever be
Always, always here is Infinity
This Unified Field, this space just to be

We live at the crossroads choosing Truth or illusion
Feeding the mask or living as the REAL ONE
Present, alive, without care or need
To shape, to change, to judge, indeed!
Here at the point of decision I rest
In infinite patience, I am infinitely blessed!





Angel Wings

By Laura Bowman

Angel wings
Beautiful things
Flutter from a log.

Gypsy kings
Wearing rings
Stand up proud and tall.

All through the earth beneath my toes
Life flows
Reciprocity grows
The web of mycelia knows.

The kingdom of fungi shows.



Angel Drop

By Scarlett Tarabochia // Age 6

The Angel glows
 She picks a child
 Each and every one
 She flutters through the water,
 one by one
 Taking each child
 For a ride through
 the pretty pink sunset sky
 She takes the child
 On her back
 So each and every child gets to feel the glitter.



Halibut and Haring // oil on canvas painting // P. Payne



Harvest Poem

By Janrey

The big pumpkin rises from the horizon.
 The small ones awake.
 Earthquake starts
 To destroy
 The big one brightens and blooms
 The small one rises from the ground
 The harvest has started.

Alaska's Harvest

Photo by Chris Byrnes

By Lloyd Montgomery —*F/V SeaSeeRider*

Past

Present

By Nature March 27, 1964

By Man March 24, 1989

Harvest Earth Wide

On Land

Off Land

Harvest by

One Hand

Or Many

Season

Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter

Harvest Time

Spring, Summer, Fall

Harvest by Hand, Machine, Nets

Harvest by One or Many

Or Many Captains

Harvest by Pound

Or Many Tons

Harvest by Seed

Or Sea

Harvest Not by Choice

By Nature

March 27th, 1964 Earthquake

Razor Clams, Dungeness Crab

By Man

March 24th, 1989

Tanner Crab, Herring,

Last Harvest 1997

Loss of Harvest by Man

Exxon Valdez

Tanker,

Bligh Reef.

Prince William Sound

Many are Gone, No Longer Harvest,

Those Left Behind Will Never Forget

Who Witnessed the Last Harvest



All Part of It

By Riley Howard

Late nights, early mornings.
 Cold as hell, diesels burning.
 Pay your dues on account.
 Bills are stacking, too much to count.
 Fix the boat. Mend the net.
 Tear it up, and try again.
 High prices, No fish.
 Low prices, Go fish.
 The fish are here, they close the flats.
 You need a retro, they send hats.
 Set the net, and take a nap.
 You never know what you might wrap.
 Highs and lows, Too much fish.
 One tender left. Are you on the list?
 One foot of water, running fast.
 The boat is old, but you paid cash.
 Dreams come true. Good and bad.
 You asked for this as a lad.
 It ebbs and floods just like the tide.
 Fishing is a wild ride.
 So many things you can't control.
 Just break even, that's the goal.
 So set your net, and play your role.
 You can't complain your life is full.



Photo by David Saiget

Worth a Life

By Greg Mans

Half-eaten muffins on the table
 Diesel engine clacking
 The Sea passes by the window
 Our minds wander to lovers of yesterday and tomorrow
 With the hope of fish
 With the hope of time
 And that all of this will be worth a life



Pika Harvest // Photo by Milo Burcham

Untitled

By Sam Nuzzi // age 5

A little animal was looking for food,
 he found some, so was in a good mood.
 Next, he made a nice cozy nest,
 made of bird feathers he liked best.
 Then he made a burrow to put his nest in,
 and gather winter food to go in his bin.
 Time for him to go to bed now,
 and when he wakes up, he'll take a bow
 . . . to the world.

Fall Forecast

By Morgan DeLaet

Plants crinkle slowly
 Fog hovers on the harsh sea
 Gray rain brings dark days



Photo by Dorne Hawxhurst

Fall's Leaf

By Danilo So & Eli Totemoff

Some leaves are crunchy
 Many leaves have different shades
 The sky is darker

The Sonic

By Lander & Harbor Ammerman // *ages 6 & 7*

Balls bounce in the world
 Of circles.
 Harvest blueberries.
 Put them
 In Water.
 Worms come out.
 They squiggle
 And they wiggle.
 The gecko climbs
 Into the hammock.
 He climbs onto the rock.
 He goes into his cave.
 He awakes when it's night.
 The gecko eats worms.
 We eat blueberries.

Photo by Teal Barmore



The Smell of Autumn

By Gwethalyn Jacob

The scent of spices
 Sweet cinnamon, cardamom,
 Disperse through the air.

The Outside of Makeup

By Harbor & Lander Ammerman // *ages 7 & 6*

Nature is makeup.
 Use blueberries.
 Put them on my face.
 When you're done,
 It feels like water.
 Splat the blueberries on your hand.
 It looks like blood.
 On my face
 It feels like water,
 In the hot sun.

Time

By Greg Mans

Time, Mortality

That gift forcing us to play our hands

Our hands

I don't even know my hand

Make me throw card

I'd sit at this table forever

All eyes waiting, impatient

If not for you



Photo by Elena Golyeva

Photo by Elena Golyeva



Energy Rich

By Jillian Gold

You told me that you're not

Yourself anymore

The fruits that you love

To share no longer

Ripe at your limbs

I taste them easily

Even now fat with juices

You've always offered

Down my throat dripping

A reminder to savor

This and each moment

Like Thoreau sucking marrow

Flying to the Moon

By Jeanie Gold

Waking up the “inner surface” of mind
 Offers a most magical, mystical ride
 In the complete opposite direction
 Of mind’s usual outward-focused attention
 On surroundings and body sensations.

It’s an exploration, away from
 The familiar, the regular, the tangible,
 The everyday, the customary, the typical;
 The logical, the reason-able, the rational,
 The dogmatic, rhetorical, or easily explicable.



Alone in the Valley // Illustration by Charles Carroll



It’s a voyage to the inmost experience of Self
 Which, at first, and for quite a while,
 Ever-jostled by sensitivities and sounds,
 Seems cumbersome, difficult, strange;
 Feels awkward, intimidating, opaque.

Quieting the body
 Involves gentle, persistent perseverance
 Through sudden bouts of itchy body parts,
 Sneezing spells and dry-throat starts,
 And restless limbs, protesting stillness.

Quieting the mind
 Requires a host of things to overcome
 Like random thoughts and distractions,
 Seemingly urgent considerations and attractions,
 And cycles of mental agitation or abstraction.

Having a true meditation guide
 Pointing the way and shining a light,
 Illuminating challenges and rewards
 And navigational skills to develop and heed,
 Has been a vitally important component for me.

This inward expedition
 Into the deepest reaches of mind,
 Behind which the soul is said to hide
 And where unlimited healing powers reside,
 May just well be, like flying to the moon —
 on the inside.

September Sting

By Oshiana Black

Not quite engulfed in Winter's shadow
Wrapping bear arms around the last golden gleaming
Undemented and unbridled by the vapid Unknowing

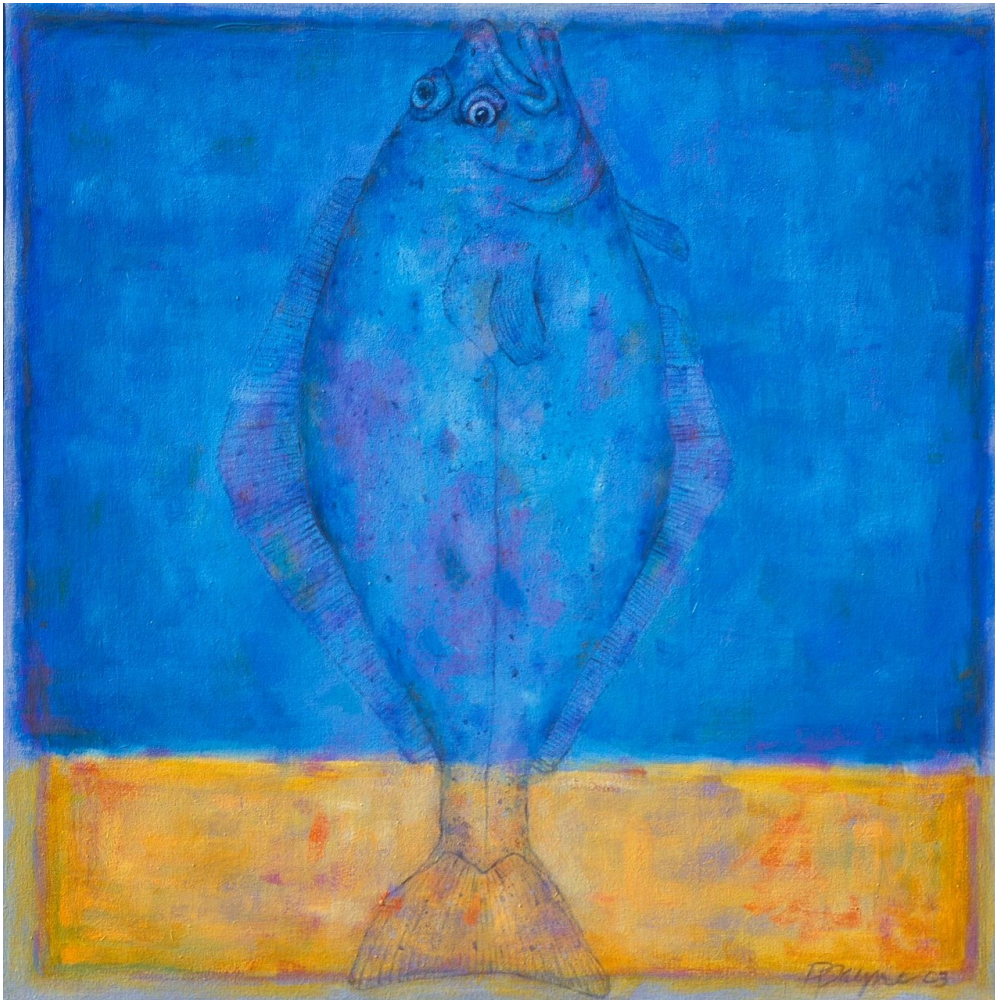
Internal construction makes our time obscure
It drags, it flies,
Is your time a graph, a circle or line?
I wish I could rewind the laughter -
The muck could fast-forward
Not giving in to Winter,
feels like the calendar was folded

Cried ocean salty tears for green,
how quickly it was shooed away
Like how you took the broom
and shook it at the crows at play

Verbalized to the sky and heavens to hold off,
for a second

With the warmth of life still present
we can see ourselves, in the present
Sensations from your brain center
is all we really have, and each other
We see, we feel, touch, taste, and know, sense
In tune with it, our great Moon and Earth Mother
We're surrounded by sounds - mathematical waves,
birds and rustle in the leaves
Wept for the decaying of the earth,
craving contentment, and peace
The Fall lends itself to the extremes.

In Autumn, the drifting sun angles
and birds are defiantly dancing
Suspended in atmosphere just wanting to land again -
A solid, a transition space for the time being.

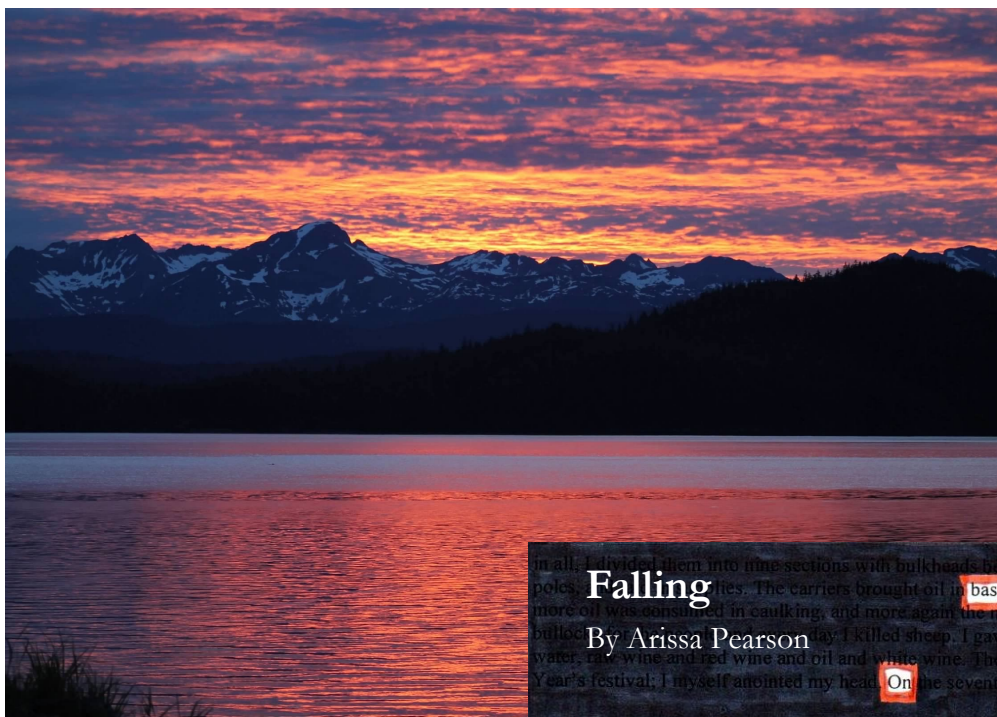


Halibut and Rothko // oil on canvas painting by P. Payne

September Tragedy

By Hyrum Fish

Flying planes collide
Towers fall from stormy skies
People help and die



Cordova Sunset // Photo by Jade Sharky

Autumn Sensation

By Amee Hamberger

Autumn sensation

Changes colors as a fire

Sweet as a cool breeze

Falling

By Arissa Pearson

in all, I divide them into nine sections with bulkheads between. I drove in wedges where needed. I saw to the pump poles, the carriers brought oil in baskets, I poured pitch into the furnace and asphalt and oil more oil was consumed in caulking, and more again the master of the boat took into his storerooms. I slaughtered bullock. On the seventh day I killed sheep. I gave the shipwrights wine to drink as though it were river water, raw wine and red wine and oil and white wine. There was feasting then as there is at the time of the New Year's festival; I myself anointed my head. On the seventh day the boat was complete.

"Then was the launching full of difficulty; there was shifting of ballast above and below till two thirds was submerged. I loaded into her all that I had of gold and of living things, my family, my kin, the beast of the field both wild and tame, and all the craftsmen. I sent them on board, for the time that Shamash had ordained was already fulfilled when he said, 'In the evening, when the rider of the storm sends down the destroying rain, enter the boat and batten her down.' The time was fulfilled; the evening came, the rider of the storm sent down the rain. I looked out at the weather and it was terrible, so I too boarded the boat and battened her down. All was now complete, the battening and the caulking; so I handed the tiller to Puzur-Amurri the steersman, with the navigation and the care of the whole boat."

"With the first light of dawn a black cloud came from the horizon; it thundered within where Apsu, lord of the storm was riding. In front over hill and plain Shullat and Hanish, heralds of the storm, led on. Then the gods of the abyss rose up; Nergal pulled out the dams of the nether waters, Ninurta the war-lord threw down the dykes, and the seven judges of hell, the Annunaki, raised their torches, lighting the land with their livid flame. A stupor of despair went up to heaven when the god of the storm turned daylight to darkness, when he smashed the land like a cup. One whole day the tempest raged, gathering fury as it went; it poured over the people like the tides of battle; a man could not see his brother nor the people be seen from heaven. Even the gods were terrified at the flood, they fled to the highest heaven, the firmament of An; they crouched against the walls, covering like cubs. Then Ishtar the sweet-voiced Queen of Heaven cried out like a woman in travail: 'Alas the days of old are turned to dust because I commanded evil; why did I command thus evil in the council of all the gods? I commanded wars to destroy the people, but are they not my people, for I brought them forth? Now like the spawn of fish they float in the ocean.'"

"The great gods of heaven and of hell wept, they covered their mouths. For six days and six nights the winds blew, torrent and tempest and flood overwhelmed the world, tempest and flood raged together like warring hosts. When the seventh day dawned the storm from the south subsided, the sea grew calm, the flood was stilled; I looked at the face of the world and there was silence, all mankind was turned to clay. The surface of the sea stretched as flat as a roof-top; I opened a hatch and the light fell on my face. Then I bowed low, I sat down and I wept, the tears streamed down my face, for on every side was the waste of water. I looked for land in vain, but fourteen leagues distant there appeared a mountain, and there the boat grounded; on the mountain of Nisir the boat held fast, she held fast and did not budge. One day she held, and a second day on the mountain of Nisir she held fast and did not budge. A third day, and a fourth day she held fast on the mountain and did not budge; a fifth day and a sixth day she held fast on the mountain. When the seventh day dawned I loosed a dove and let her go. She flew away, but finding no resting-place she returned. Then I loosed a swallow, and she flew away but finding no resting-place she returned. I loosed a raven, he saw that the waters had retreated, she ate, she flew around, she cawed, and she did not come back. Then I threw everything open to the four winds, I made a sacrifice and poured out a libation on the mountain top. Seven and again even eulorion set up on their stands, I heaped up wood and cane and cedar and myrtle. When the gods smelled the sweet savor, they gathered like flies over the sacrifice. Then, at last, Ishtar also came, she lifted her necklace with the jewels of heaven that once And had made to please her. 'O you gods here present, by the lapis lazuli round my neck I shall remember these days, I shall remember the jewels of my throat; these last days I shall not forget. Let all the gods gather round the sacrifice, except Enlil. He shall not approach this offering, for without reflection he rushed to the flood, he consigned my people to destruction.'"

Falling uses as its source text *The Epic of Gilgamesh: A Great Flood*, by George, Andrew, N. K.

Sandars, and Richard Pasco; translated by George, Andrew; published by Penguin Classics, 2003.

The Feels of Fall

By Amyah Kedzierski

The smell of pumpkins

Colorful leaves yellow, red

Please let me stay here.



Silver

By Steve Schoonmaker — *F/V Saulteur*

Silver the surface
Deep blue beneath
Ripples to wave's break
The rivers release

Rocks wear, and stones round
Silent, unseen, the sounds of a creek always there
The mountainsides lean, the Bald Eagles scream
With the smell of the Sea in the air

Varoom. . . bum. bum. bum. . . bum. . . bum
Starts a diesel, an anchor clangs up
As a morning arrives, a boat hull slides
As a predator sips at a cup

Silver the catch, shining wet in mystery
Ice in the hold, scupper holes bleed
Extracting a net, from a life-giving sea

Wild eyed the Salmon, flip, flop and fight
There at the roller fighting with me
And the existence of need
And the unknown and distant
More people to feed

Brailer bags swing, as the slush runs away
As the tender scales deliver the numbers to pay
Extracting the breeze of an indifferent bay
A price per pound piece meal to pay bills refrain

To the wrist and shoulder pain
As brutal sustains, wearing the coasts of the Sea
The pounding persistence of eventual retreat
Well I feel it in me

Under Gulls on the wind, as times ever change
As the Ocean is warming, as pressures arrange

With the existence of need
Yea, the unknown and distant more people to feed
Wild Salmon at the roller fighting death with me
Forty summers long now, an earning to meet
Older and weathered with Salmon to eat

Silver the surface, flesh red the meat
As ripples to wave's break, and rivers release
As Humans loom larger, with existence of need
And the Salmon grow smaller, more people to feed

And I'm not growing younger
And my boat's growing old
And I'm losing my hearing in the wet and the cold
And my settlement's less that my strife for the gold
And bloody the ice, that's left in my hold

As brutal sustains
The price per pound piecemeal to pay bills refrain
To the wrist and shoulder pain
As the brailer bags swing, and the slush runs away

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Mortal my muscle, mortal my brain
 Precious this life, that the Salmon sustain
 I tow in a hook, and then run the net
 To the majestically scenic, I'm humbly in debt
 Buoy to buoy, to get what I get
 Scratching or booming, life claiming death
 Silver the surface, red flesh beneath
 Bloody the ice, as surrender repeats
 Yea, I can feel it in me
 As the rivers release for the Seasons to be
 Under Gulls on the wind, with existence of need
 With the unknown and distant, more people to feed

As rock wear, and stones round
 Silent, unseen, the sounds of a creek always there
 The mountainsides lean, as the Bald Eagles scream
 With the smell of the Sea in the air

Silver the surface, deep blue beneath
 Ripples to wave's break, the rivers release
 In the dusk of the season
 I feel it in me.



Photo by Jillian Gold

Winter Sailors

By S.S.

Cold, wet masochistic bodies flailing forcefully upwind all day.
 Waves sloshing, spraying, testing our nerves, core and failing dexterity to maintain
 some sort of semblance of a straight line upon the water.
 Narrow inches from colliding, even a strained pinky could throw this entire delicately balanced
 and foolish game into an icy drink.
 Even the greatest contest with the pure unfairness which nature holds against us.
 Warm front from the lee, swamped, cold bodies muster courage to force
 cramped muscles back into uncomfortable tiny posts once again.
 All for the thrill of rounding a few tiny little buoys....

Turtle Eggs

By Rob Ammerman

With a spade in my hand,
And a bag on my hip,
I dug up all the stars
That I could see.

The milky way,
Writhing, rippling, piled up
In the depths of a burlap sack.

I kept one in my pocket,
Pulled the curtains over the rest,
Buried the treasure in the bed of my truck
And drove to my own behest.

No jackrabbit
A match in the dark
For the speed of these
unborn terrapins.

Far from the ocean
But not totally misplaced,
That single egg hummed in my pocket.

All I desired
Was just a small taste,
A window seat,
With a view from a rocket.

Searching for starfire
In the belly of the minotaur,
I fumbled with the horn of plenty.



I'd been parched by the heat of summer,
Now I'm drowned by the squalls of autumn.

My cup runneth over.

My spade shattered.
My bag, emptied.
Heavens scattered
on black asphalt.

Under a moonless, starless sky
I lapped up trailing comets
From a lake of broken glass.

Jaws, unhinged,
Serpentine and wide.
Wolves gnawing on bleached skulls,
Stomachs, unoccupied.

I gobbled it all up.
As much
as I might try.

That remaining light.
That eternal fire.

Nothing but me,
The black hole,

The river of life,
Dimmed but not extinguished,
Edible but not exhaustible,
Plodding its way back to the sea.

Silhouettes in the dark.
Scuttling flickers of flame.
Paper lanterns floating
On infinity.

Home,
That place,
Riding the waves of outer space.

In and out.
In and out.
In and out.

Stars in the black sand.

harvest

By David Lynn Grimes

H is for Halibut, strongest of all creatures, grandmother of the ocean, built like a wave. Don't overcook her, keep her flesh moist. Try not to harvest the biggest ones, all those productive grandmas.

H is for Humpbacks, seasonal migrants on the energy meridian between Hawaii and Alaska, from Kona to Cape Clear. Humpback whales only eat during half the year — in winter they're just singing and breeding and having kids in Hawaii. But in June off the north end of Latouche we've seen a dozen whales bubble net feeding in coordinated choreography, mobs of gulls wheeling and shrieking overhead. The trick is, all the whales submerge, then down below one starts to swim in a big sizzling circle, blowing bubbles to trap food fish inside a rising curtain of air. Other whales begin to blow bubbles too, encircling the prey, and on a given signal all the whales in consistent formation crowd up vertically inside the curtain...then whoa, look out, hold onto your hat...a dozen gaping jaws, like a fleet of open-mouthed buses, lunge up and break the surface in riotous exuberance, swallowing oodles of ocean and ecstatic flashing fish. Listen on a hydrophone a safe distance away and you'll hear a sonorous singing, a uniform vocal note that helps direct the boisterous water ballet. Some blow bubbles, some sing a song, everybody joins in the infinite feast.

H is for Herring, **H** for Hemlock trees. Get your hemlock branches, put them in the water where herring are spawning, in turquoise water milky with milt. In a few days the branches are coated with rich herring roe, a thick foliage of pearls, a wild harvest of spring. Find pearly lines of herring roe in the high tide beach wrack. Or a herring school out in Galena Bay, ruffling the water surface like rain drops, telling you where they are and just like that they're gone. A herring school in the April night in a phosphorescent sea, glimmering like the northern lights under water, with sea lions spiraling through like rowdy green rockets, as big as brown bears with fiery snorkels and fins.



Rescued Hummer // Photo by David Lynn Grimes



Wild Currant Leaves // Photo by Karen Button

Eagles and land otters, humpbacks and humans, everyone digs the spring herring feast. Herring roe-on-kelp, in the Japanese food esthetic, is like caviar already spread on toast. The kelp represents the mystery and essence of the ocean and the roe the plentitude of life. The Japanese call herring "ghost fish," maybe for the mysterious way they appear and disappear in the euphoric turquoise milk spawning sea.

H is for Hummingbird, our rufous ones, little feathered jewels buzzing with GPS aboard, returning yearly to the same hummingbird feeder in Chenega after migrating back from, well, who knew where? Outside her living room window Kate McLaughlin had a feeder inside a cage; when we saw a hummer at the feeder she would pull on a string from the kitchen, and the string ran through the house and out through a hole in one wall and clang, it dropped the door of the cage. We would weigh and measure the little critter, she would carefully place a tiny band around one ankle, then put a temporary drop of white paint on top of its head so as not to recapture it in the following weeks.

The next year, though, she would miraculously recapture some banded the year before — wherever they spent winters, in spring they were making their way back to the same damn feeder, on a remote island in the middle of nowhere....though it might be the center of the universe, once you've tasted the sugar water. Rufous hummingbirds have a seasonal range throughout western North America; many overwinter in Mexico. But exactly where were her banded birds going? That mystery I believe is technically still unanswered, but some years ago Kate captured a hummer in Chenega with a teensy ring on it, for once one *she* had not put on. It had been attached in Florida, and that represents the longest known hummingbird migration in the world.

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Besides sugar water, hummers of course harvest real flower nectar, and some insects and spiders on the side, and they can use spider silk to bind together soft nesting material to make a very comfy and cozy nest. But dear friends, beware of too much web! Twice in my life I've rescued hummingbirds from house-rafter cobwebs, harvested hummers you might say, carefully climbing a shaky ladder up to where they weakly fluttered, exhausted in the airy gloom. Then you climb back down one-handed, they're oh so still in your palm, and you patiently unwrap strands of web, delicately extricate teeny feet, they're as still as death and zoom they're gone.

H is for Hooligan. Hooligan oil, hooligan grease. Aboriginally, hooligan grease was in many places the most important trade item from Coast to Interior, so much so that trade trails became known as "grease trails." We bread and fry them and eat them whole. Or dry them and light them, these candlefish.

H is for Humpies, harvested by seiners, give thanks and praises and "Let 'er go!" The shimmying seine jitterbugs off the back deck, and look at them humpies jumping like popcorn, leaping clear of the water on their way home.

H is for Home. Home waters, home fires, the hearth, the heart. At camp in a Copper River back eddy I catch a salmon, cut off it's head, pull out the still beating heart, place it in my palm, close my fingers over it. It gives a beat and I freaking jump! It beats again and I moan. Here, you try it. So shocking, this electric jolt of love throbbing in our hands, fierce and tender, deeply troubling, exquisitely echoing in body and soul. It is a deep dream, this forever kinship between harvest and harvester. After so many years and so many thousands passing commercially through my hands, I find it easier to say thank you when catching them one at a time. I place fireweed flowers in the mouth of the severed head, kiss it on the bright slimy lips, plop it back into the river. "Make a good report to the other salmon," I say. "Tell them we're good people, fun to camp with, amusing really, and not all that bad."

Yes, H is for Heart. Deer heart simmering in the pan and the hunter home from the hills.

A is for Appetite, hunger as invitation to get to know all our neighbors in the food web of life: "Hi there, pleased to meet you, are you good to eat?" A is for Ally etiquette, a please and thank you to all the other critters, everything which creeps or crawls, swims or flies, all that bloom and photosynthesize. The shiny shells, wind and waves, sweet mountain flowers and groovy cool rocks. A is for Ancestors, *qaadALyAK iinbinuu* in Eyak, "those who came before," those who passed on the knowledge of how to harvest, of what's good to eat, how to prepare and all the what not. Advanced technologies include: exquisite ocean-



Photo by Chris Byrnes

going red cedar dugout canoes, nimble seal-skin kayaks, sleek arrows and spears, halibut line of bull kelp stipe (first soaked in fresh water, stretched and then twisted for strength, more line added with a fisherman's knot), a halibut hook of bone, yellow cedar and yew, the tidal fish trap, the 50 fathom shackle and hydraulic reel.

R is for Red salmon, *Cha' ch'* in the Eyak tongue, alarmingly beautiful ocean-fresh flesh. Out of a bright silver body as if by magic the rapturous red appears with the first fillet slice. As our tongues and fingers are colored by contact with blueberries, so red salmon and flamingoes are colored by their tiny shrimp-like crustacean food. But Sockeye salmon flesh at spawning time becomes kind of rubbery white, when the carotenoid dyes migrate out to paint the skin scarlet bright. That's my theory anyway. I don't know why the cheeks turn green.

What was her favorite salmon, Chief Marie Smith Jones, last Native speaker of Eyak? — *gingaadAG*, the spawning male reds with dashing green cheeks, and a big sailback hump which she sliced off the top and ate raw before you knew it. After a lifetime of eating salmon of all sorts in all seasons, that was her favorite way. I remember dipnetting a few *gingaadAG* for her out of Power Creek a long time ago. Were we breaking the law or adhering to a more ancient code? Well don't tell anyone. Protect salmon habitat, and give thanks to our fish family kin.

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Red is as well for Watermelon, a slice of red flesh and green rind, my favorite food as a child. I don't know why the rind is green. But I remember, down on the ground with a big one in the garden, opening a hole and eating right into the middle, right through the heart and climbing out the other side. Did that really happen? All of which in haiku form might go something like this, when the fruit and fish are over a lifetime combined, as they both suddenly were around a supper fire last summer, a stroke of insight there on my plate:

*at last I know why
red salmon so lovely, just...
like watermelon!*

R is for Red berries, and there's a lot: high bush cranberries, watermelon berries, mountain ash berries and currants. Dwarf dogwood. And bog cranberries, overwintered, milky red, tasting like cranberry wine. We barefoot up the warm Heney muskeg meadows, tramping towards Mt. Baldy, bog water squishing between our toes. This is the life, we've got skis on our backs, the snow up there most likely will force us into ski boots and socks.

Another tip for the hip, as if you didn't already know, the best ammo for pushki pea-shooters is high bush cranberry clusters, and the splatting red berries solve the age-old question of who got who:

*stalk of cow parsnip
dry and hollow, perfect for
launching cranberries*

R is for More Red berries, those of devil's club, evidently relished by bears. Didn't we once on a Copper River gravel bar come across old bear scat sporting a wee lawn of green sprouts, and didn't I wonder just what seeds those sprouts were from, and wasn't I down on my hands and knees nibbling the greenery, spouting "By golly, they're devil's club!" There may be a hundred and fifty miles of riverbank between McCarthy and the Million Dollar Bridge, and I still remember pretty much where that scat was, in the long cut bank stretch on river right, below the endless dunes of the Bremner Sands. I think we have a special memory that turns on when we harvest stuff, to find once again what once we had found.

Sprouts do get bigger, become devil's club stalks, ever eager to lend a spiny hand on steep desperate slopes. Hang a piece over your doorway, it's like a lucky horseshoe, to ward off evil spirits and invite the cool ones in. Now sit down with a cup of devil's club tea, brewed from the inner bark, supposed to be an immune system tonic, maybe look it up. Mostly I just nibble on the bark as a way to say hello, and I would certainly try the scat sprouts again.

'Twas a sunny summer day with a friend from faraway, and while climbing Mt. Eyak she asked me what the spiky shrub was. "Oh, that's *Oplopanax horridus*, our mighty devil's club," and didn't I pontificate about Alaska ginseng's merits, and isn't it magnificent, the architecture of its leaves, and aren't those spines impressive, fierce and scary, until I stopped, feeling suddenly foolish and a bit embarrassed, because well, hadn't the devil's club been in the room with us the whole damn time? In my thoughts I reached out, "Gee, sometimes I feel like I don't know how to communicate with you." And devil's club answered, "Well, how do you communicate with yourself?" I'll always remember that.

Red is for Baneberry berries, though sometimes they're white, and it's best not to eat any of them, poisonous as they are. But how in this wide world do we know what's safe to eat? Because someone tried it and then passed on the knowledge. Or someone tried it and in the knowledge passed out.

R is for *Rubus*, Latin for the blackberry/raspberry/salmonberry gang. There's *Rubus pedata*, "trailing raspberry," twining low down on the mossy forest floor. The teeny ripe red fruits taste like sour cherry cobbler that could be served on a thimble in a doll house bakery.

And *Rubus spectabilis*, oh great salmonberry, stuffed with dainty blueberries and baked in a pie. Something of a riddle that it comes in red and yellow, what's up with that anyway, does anyone know why?

And R is most definitely for *Rubus arcticus*, diminutive nagoon berry, sweet treasure beyond measure:

*rubus arcticus
magenta flower green leaf
taste small wet autumn*

(continues on next page)



Salmonberry // Photo by Arlene Rosenkrans

R is for Razor clams, sweet flesh of the tidal sands. With all the vast and innumerable sandbar islands and tidal flats created by the Copper River's sandy outflow — as it transports to the sea great mountains ground down to sediment by the glaciers of the watershed — Cordova was once the "Razor Clam Capital of the World." But their numbers were diminished by over-harvesting, coupled with the 1964 Good Friday earthquake which uplifted the whole region by a couple meters, leaving many of the clam beds high and dry. Let us imagine their return, and their flesh upon our tongues, amen.

R is for Rain, heavy at times, harvested from all that moist ocean air. The low pressure systems line up in the Gulf, sweeping waterlogged heavens to shower the endless coastal range. Up at elevation the rain turns to snow, over the years all that snow compresses to ice, then giant blue ice dragons flow down and carve vast mountain valleys, at their lower ends harvesting icebergs back with a boom into mother sea, at Unakwik and Nellie Juan and Harriman Fjord, or calving like splendid thunder into ever-growing Miles Lake, toppling with explosive roars into turbulent river current along the Childs Glacier face: our little rafts, each with a cheery flag, drifting so small beneath the enormous glacier wall, and massive raw jewel icebergs bobbing along beside us, they really are as big as houses, eerie blue Godzillas, oh so spooky beautiful and very much alive. They shudder and spin and look us right between the eyes.



Photo by David Lynn Grimes

Rain in Eyak: *k'uleh*, maybe more a concept than a thing, as in "Oh, another day." A language of the rainforest is different from one of the desert. The Eyaks arrived on the coast long ago and said, "We'll camp here 'til the rain stops." 3500 years later, "Oh, another day."

V is for Valerian, for valerian root, beloved by the Pied Piper and by all the rats and cats, look it up. Make a sedative tincture, tuck a flower behind one ear, chew a small chunk of root on the climb to Crater Lake. V is for *Vaccinium*, for *Vaccinium* fruit, the huckleberries and blue berries both low bush and high, we'll pull a quart from the freezer and with the weather so fine, make breakfast on the back deck, after all it's solstice morning! Let's look for orcas in the Chiswells, and be in Resurrection Bay tonight.

E is for Eagle. Above Spirit Mountain we camp on an island accessed by a hidden shallow channel, on the side of the valley away from the main Copper flow. That evening an eagle drops from the cottonwoods and catches a salmon wriggling in the shallows. One talon gripped the salmon while the other leg hopped towards land, and with a bit of gumption the eagle managed to bring the fish to shore. We gathered firewood for supper and watched the eagle dining, and then someone said, "Wouldn't it be fun if *we* had an eagle to catch us fish for dinner?" I said, "I think maybe we do." It wasn't long before the eagle lumbered off in heavy satisfied flight. Someone moseyed up the beach to find half a perfect salmon cleanly left behind. E is for Eating. The exclusive riverside menu that night: eagle-caught red salmon, locally sourced, grilled on a bed of rice, with orange-garlic-ginger sauce, and salad freshly garnished with nearby fireweed blossoms, followed by wild raspberry dutch oven brownies, and heavenly music around the fire.

E is for Extinction. Chief Marie told me she didn't think the Eyak language would truly go extinct when she died, because, "The language comes from the land, and as long as the land and water and animals are alive, the people will learn the language."

S is for Strawberries, wild ones growing thickly on sand bar barrier islands. A pilot once told of counting 60 bears between Katalla and Cordova, crawling on their bellies through the ripe strawberry gardens.

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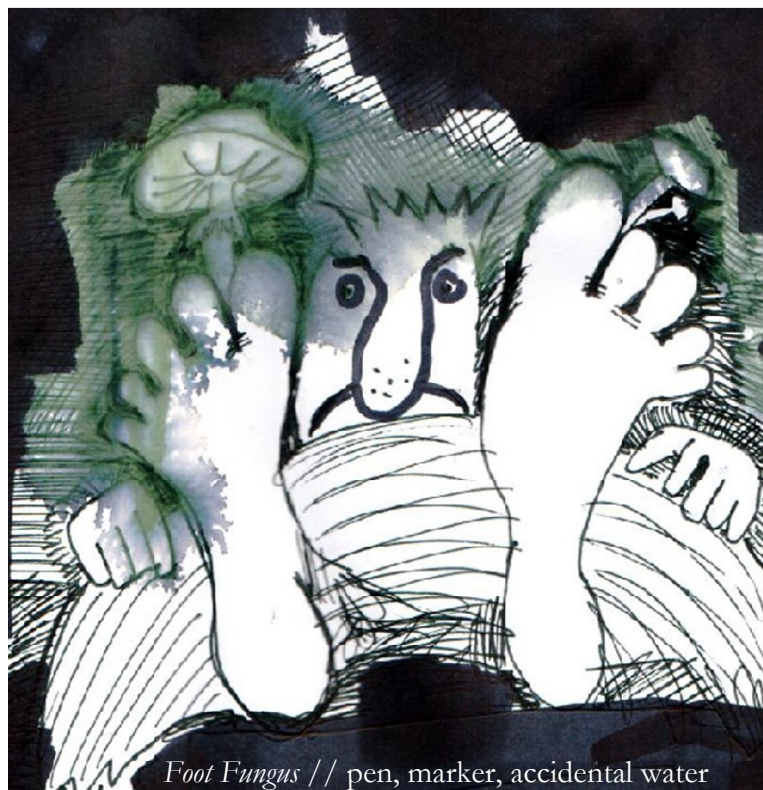
S is for *Steinpilz*, German for “stone mushroom,” aka the king bolete, and their tan-brown caps really do look something like a soft stone on a hillside. Called *porcini* in Italy (“little pig”) and *cèpe* in France, and in England cep or penny bun, but I just call them “loaves.” And when we collect them with hedgehog mushrooms, “biscuits” in the moss, we make a song and sing along, picking the biscuits and loaves. King boletes are big, robust and meaty, the flesh is sweet and nutty with a delicious creamy crunch. And instead of gills, boletes sport a spongy layer under their caps; hedgehogs a field of tiny teeth. Biscuits and loaves. There’s a place on Knight Island we’ve often found them in August, sometimes in the company of gypsy mushrooms. Can’t give you the exact coordinates. And there’s a place out around McKinley Lake I call Biscuit Island. One year I remember finding a huge number of king boletes conveniently located in Nirvana Park. The main thing is, send me any you harvest and I’ll be happy to eat and identify them. They are great dried and added to soups. And now I’m drooling, because S is for salivation.

*I forgot falling off the horse
with the happiness
of finding mushrooms*

—Ukei

And S is for Speaking of mushrooms, let us now praise morels. My friend Dave Johnston, who in 1967 played an important role in the first winter ascent of Denali (during which time he had several toes harvested by frostbite), was once on a springtime climb in the Chugach with Vin Hoeman, the first person to climb the high points of all 50 states, if you keep track of those things. Arriving after dark into a fragrant forest, Dave and Vin had just settled into their sleeping bags when Vin said, “Morels! I can smell them!” Indeed in the morning they were surrounded by a friendly troop. Morels are a peculiar being (aren’t we all), a wrinkled pitted hollow sponge atop a hollow stalk. Pretty-darn-not-too-bad delicious, meaty, earthy and chewy, but often exceedingly hard to spy against a backdrop of leaf litter and soil. Plus they move around while you’re looking. They often sprout like gangbusters in a forest the year after a fire; in the spring of 2020 I found them on the Kenai, growing around the roots of giant old cottonwoods scorched by flames the season before.

Foraging for mushrooms, or berries, or Easter eggs, we develop a “search image” that we use to scan the neighborhood for the object of our desire. One spring in the Sierra north of Yosemite I picked morels in a burn from the previous season. All afternoon we roamed ashy forested hills, gathering morels in wicker baskets, with the search image of the mushroom blazing in our mind’s eye. That night after a sumptuous feast we slept in a green meadow under giant ponderosa pines. When I first closed my eyes I saw



Foot Fungus // pen, marker, accidental water

By Sergei Bogatchev

my hands still reaching out to pluck morels. (A similar thing can happen after you pick fish all day from a gillnet). Late in the night I woke to see the heavens above crowded with stars, and somewhat more alarmingly, the dark silhouettes of the giant pines against the bright starry sky looked exactly like morels, only a hundred and fifty feet high. The tables were turned and I muttered “please, please, don’t harvest me just yet.” The giant morels were mellow, didn’t make a move, only whispered sleepily in the sweet night air.

S is for Stinging, the stinging nettles, which zap you good as you run naked through a patch. I always greet them myself by brushing my wrists over the stinging hairs, as if to apply a stimulating perfume, ouch-u-puncture, yes!

Steamed, the nettle’s stinging hairs relax and are disarmed, making of our ally a most delicious nutritious food. Really, they’re my favorite greens, exquisite with a little butter and vinegar. Drink the green water leftover from steaming, or use it to rinse your hair — everyone will ask the secret of your shine. Harvest (okay, use gloves) and hang scenic bouquets of nettles overhead in the kitchen, and delight in making tea from the aromatic dried leaves. Add dried leaves to bread or cookies or soup, whatever. You can pull off a fresh leaf too, roll it in your fingers with a bit of squish, and no problemo, eat fresh like that — most of the stinging hairs are on the stem. Overall, the best of friends that sting and bring a taste of great delight. We shall consider yellow jackets another time.

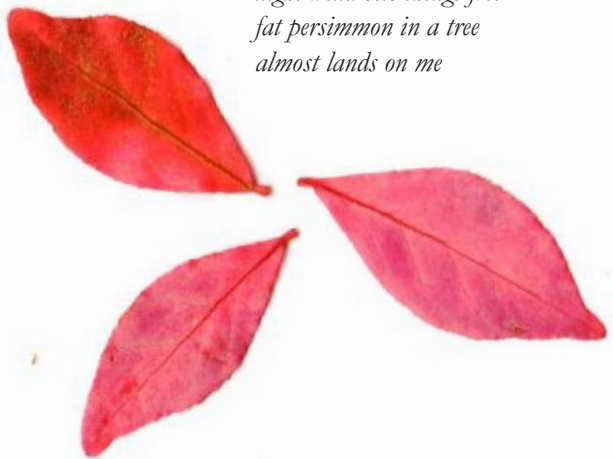
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Okay, it was a sunny evening on the river and yellow jackets were swarming our dinner plates. That was alright, until one rode Nancy's spoon into her mouth and she received three stings for the effort. Her throat didn't swell up and she didn't die, but you know, we had to wait a while to find out. I asked if I could have her ukulele.

S is for 'Simmons, hachiya persimmons, harvested down the coast in California, Santa Cruz in late-ish November. It's unbelievably lovely, up in a sun-dappled tree canopy, balancing on airy branches in gulfs of green leaves, in brilliant orange fruit realms like festive decorations, like parades of orange planets, skin of scarlet porcelain and here's what you do: when apple hard, a bite of hachiya persimmon will pucker your mouth severely, try it just for fun. But when the fruit gets softly ripe, the skin becomes jewel-like translucent and you can suck out the ultra sweet flesh through a nipped hole in the skin, as if out of a bag of jelly. They mostly come ripe all at the same time, and can then launch off the trees like jelly bombs, so if you've got hundreds, and have made all the persimmon bread you can, and sucked sweet pudding out of too many skins, well then ahead of time what can you do?

When the fruit turns from green to orange but is still perfectly firm, you peel the skins and hang the fruits to dry, on lines in windows or rafters, or maybe up under the eaves, like gorgeous Japanese lanterns you can eat in two to three weeks time, when they're no longer puckering but chewy on the outside and sweet gooey in the middle, almost like a butterscotch date. They'll keep drying for months, and get much harder, and you can massage them early on to help sugars migrate from the innards and coat their surface with sweet white glaze, and now you've made *boshigaki*, and now you've got "sweet cake" all year long. That's the traditional way to preserve the harvest. In autumnal Japan and Korea and China persimmons are peeled, hung and dried by the many thousands, often in big open-walled shelters filled with persimmons hanging from lines. I personally like to make garlands in windows, and I could happily play with persimmons forever, and in some places they call me Johnny Persimmon Seed.

*night wind sets things free
fat persimmon in a tree
almost lands on me*



S is particularly for oh what's the name of that one fish, right there on the tip of our tongues...starts with an S, you know the one. In Irish mythology Salmon is wisest of all creatures, able to find the way home. This is because the hazelnuts of knowledge fall from seven magic trees into the mountain pool where Salmon resides, and from this sacred well leap five great streams, carrying salmon wisdom to all the wide world and his mother beyond. Fish-eating killer whales, big salmon lovers, go to Kenai Fjords in May to pursue oil-rich kings. We follow in their wake, whale breath a strong brew wafting over us up on the bridge.

S is for Smoked Copper River king salmon collars, Pam Smith's if you're blessed of all beings. Eating those collars is psychedelic, and you never ever really come back, life is forever changed.

S is for Shark, and some killer whales — the "offshores" — specialize in shark predation. They bite holes in a Pacific sleeper shark's abdomen to get at the liver, a very large organ particularly rich in oil. But there may be an occupational hazard for orcas that harvest sharks. Shark skin is sandpaper, and every time you take a bite your teeth get a bit more worn down. So the story goes. Offshore teeth may wear faster than those of other orcas. Like if you really had to use your teeth to open bottle caps.

I remember when the fish-eating killer whales of AB pod were first yanking fish off long lines out in the Sound, they definitely preferred the rich black cod. Me too, frying in a pan, scandalously oily, making in the kitchen an aerosol mist, a million tiny drops of black cod fat hovering in the sun-beamed air. Most fabulous of all was the smoked black cod Steve Smith used to make in his home on Eyak Lake, below the feet of the Dancing Lady high above on Mt. Eccles, itself a giant brown bear of stone, chasing a big stony salmon. When we held a wake for Captain Smitty in February, 2010, a zillion of us filled his house, harvesting the cornucopia of his many deep freezers, making a love feast of moose and king salmon, of black cod and halibut, shrimp and dungeness and chum caviar. There were sweet razor clams. There were nagoon and salmonberry and raspberry pies, certainly beer and positively wine. Up above Steve was now getting concerned for his walls and carpets, yes, all his friends were trashing the place. Then Mike O'Leary, who preceded Steve in heaven by riding an avalanche down Mt. Eyak in a thousand foot fall, tapped Steve on the shoulder and said hey it's okay Smitty, relax, you're dead.

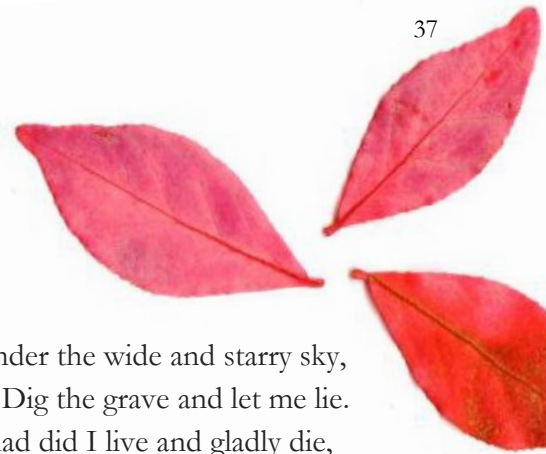
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In the early 1970s when Steve was alive and younger, he made the first great film about bald eagles, narrated by David Attenborough for the BBC. When he was younger still, a farm kid in Illinois with his left arm diminished by polio, he'd pitch a softball right-handed, then quickly pick up his right-handed glove, wrestle it on and run to where he thought the ball might get hit, and he said after all he did pretty good. His last fishing season, in his seventies, Smitty was the oldest still-standing seine skipper. Between sets he would lie down in his bunk and self-administer bags of dialysis solution, rather than be in Anchorage hooked up to some machine.

T is for Talking to our food, conversing with the harvest.

T is for Time, which **H**arvests

All things,
eve**R**yone's
in**V**ited to
th**E** infinite
Fea**ST**.



Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:

*Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.*

—Robert Louis Stevenson, *Requiem*



Pen & Pencil Illustration by Eloise Burnett

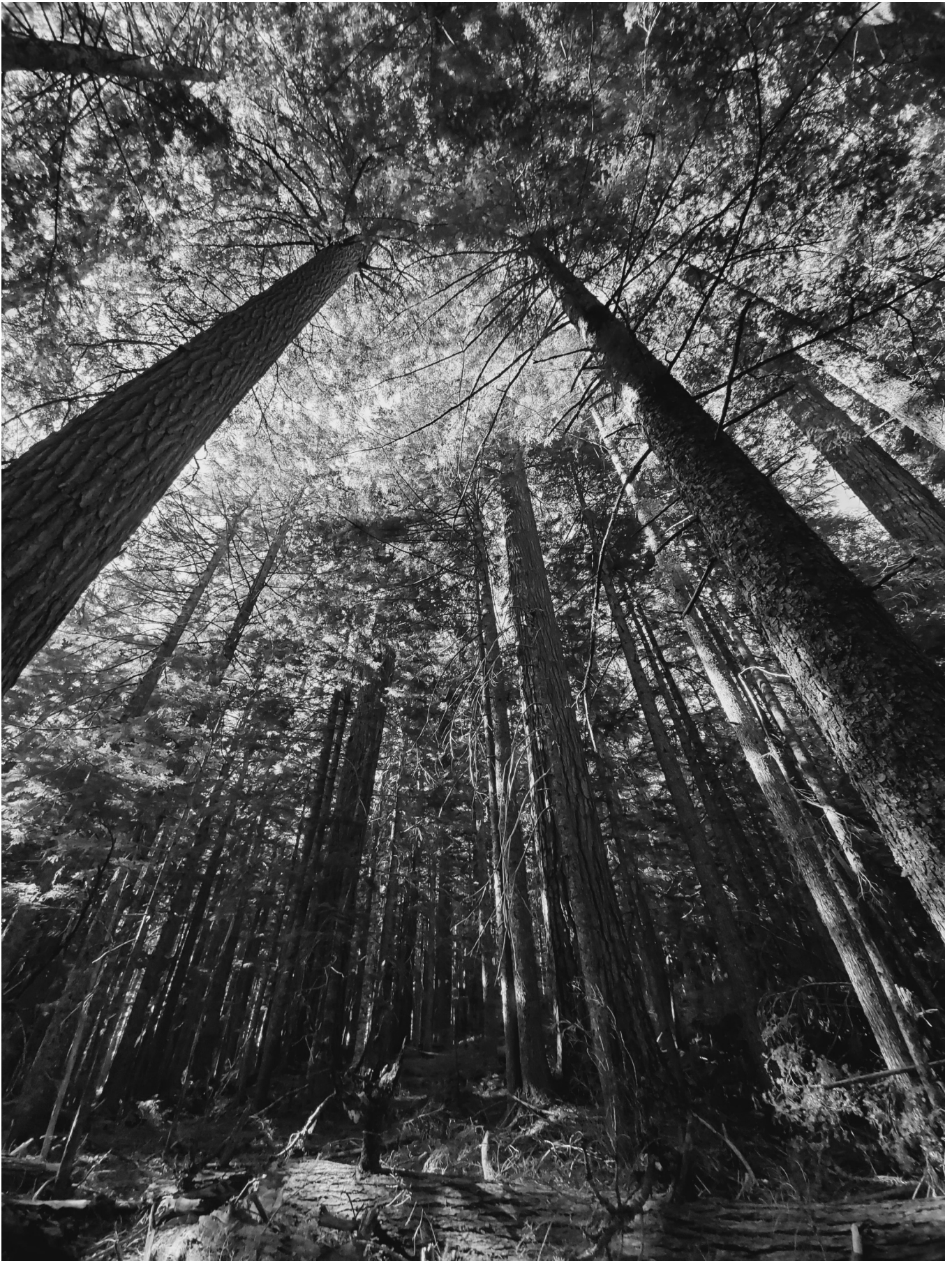


Photo by David Saiget